

VZCZCXYZ0012
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLS #0647 2641412
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 211412Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7284

UNCLAS LUSAKA 000647

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [SCUL](#) [ZA](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY LUSAKA DAY OF SERVICE

¶1. Having identified volunteerism as an activity in need of strengthening in Zambia, the Ambassador seized upon President Obama's call to service to establish an Embassy Lusaka "Volunteer Committee." The Committee's goal is to organize events for staff wanting to volunteer time and effort to Zambia's many needy people, to help them become more involved in the local communities, and to inspire Zambians to do the same.

¶2. To coincide with President Obama's National Day of Service, the Volunteer Committee identified a small community school outside of the Lusaka city limits and worked with the school administration as well as Catholic Church officials to arrange volunteer activities that would help the school.

¶3. Because the school had been burgled and even the doors had been stolen, one classroom was the repository for all desks and school equipment. That meant that students had to drag desks daily to and from classrooms, resulting in significant wear and tear. In addition, there was nothing of interest or to stimulate children on the classroom walls. Finally, the school serves as a major source of meals to many of the local orphaned and vulnerable children, who rely on its porridge for often their only meal of the day, sometimes supplemented by vegetables from the school garden.

¶4. Embassy staff repaired the desks, painted educational murals on the classroom walls, and enhanced the school garden with seedlings and a compost heap.

¶5. More than 50 American and local Embassy staff showed up to address these issues, with teams dedicated to carpentry, painting and gardening. Volunteers provided the paint, tools, equipment and seedlings, but mostly their time and enthusiasm. Local school children provided encouragement and support, as they sang welcoming songs and serenaded the workers throughout the morning.

¶6. In the spirit of public-private partnership, a welder was brought in, and in exchange for volunteering his time and expertise in installing burglar bars, Embassy Lusaka agreed to advertise his craftsmanship and generosity in upcoming embassy newsletters. With secure rooms, the newly repaired desks will stay in good condition longer.

¶9. In his remarks to local leaders, Ambassador Booth underscored the significance of American and Zambian volunteers working together. "President Obama has said that education is the currency of the 21st century, and we believe in those words most vigorously here at Dedama Community School, and throughout Zambia. Education of all children-male and female-around the world is critically important, and we are pleased to have had this opportunity to illustrate what you can achieve when people are willing to give of themselves for the betterment of others."

¶10. Embassy Lusaka's Volunteer Committee plans to organize periodic volunteer opportunities for embassy staff to assist less privileged host country nationals and to inspire Zambians to help each other.

BOOTH